COMMUNIST DIPLOMAS VALID AGAIN IN LITHUANIA. The Seimas on 18 May voted by 47 to 42 to restore the validity of diplomas issued by higher communist party schools. The vote revoked the 1990 decision by the Lithuanian Supreme Council not to recognize such diplomas. All parliament groups, except for the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party, strongly opposed the measure, seeing it as an attempt to help place former Communists in positions that require diplomas from higher schools. Rolandas Pavilionis, the chairman of the Lithuanian Rectors' Conference, criticized the vote and said that universities, in accordance with their constitutional right to autonomy, have the right not to recognize the diplomas of higher party schools. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.

COLUMBUS, Ohio (Reuter) - Investigators are questioning a medieval scholar with privileged access to the Vatican library about the possible theft of pages cut out of a priceless 14th-century Italian manuscript, a fellow scholar said Tuesday.

The New York Times said the Ohio State University scholar apparently responsible for the theft was Lithuanian-born Anthony Melnikas, a specialist in law texts who had rare unsupervised access to the library in Rome.

Princeton University medievalist James Marrow said he was contacted this month by an Akron, Ohio, art dealer for help in identifying two illustrated pages that had been brought in by a scholar, which the Times said was Melnikas. The vellum pages came from a beautifully illustrated 150-page 14th century agricultural text once owned and meticulously annotated by the Italian poet Petrarch. The pages are valued at $500,000.

Marrow said he contacted the director of the Vatican library, who found that someone had apparently used a pen knife to cut out three pages from the text. A check of library records showed Melnikas was the last to borrow the text.

A U.S. Customs Service investigator told Marrow that Melnikas had handed over the third page.